



**pennsylvania**

OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE

*Giving Crime Victims a Voice*

*Courage • Strength • Resilience*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**September 17, 2018**

## **The Fortney Family and Statute of Limitations Reform**

**Harrisburg, PA** – “All too often, we hear about the life altering impact of sexual violence in Pennsylvania. What we have a tendency to overlook, is that they aren’t merely statistics. They are people. They are truths.”

The opening of the heartbreaking [interview with the Fortney family](#), reminds us that our preconceived concepts that these atrocities aren’t happening right here in our communities, is false.

Nearly 63% of women experience sexual violence in their lifetime, while nearly 24% of men do as well. At most, 1/3 of survivors disclose as children and another 1/3 never disclose. Studies show the average age to disclose is 52.

Despite these facts, barriers still remain in Pennsylvania for survivors who seek justice. Currently, the civil statute of limitations is capped at the age of adulthood plus 12 years (age 30 for most); the criminal statute of limitations is capped at the age of adulthood plus 32 years (age 50 for most).\*

As evidenced in countless cases within Pennsylvania’s 40<sup>th</sup> grand jury report, these statutes solely benefit the perpetrators. Of the over 300 predator priests identified, a mere two were brought up on charges. “The truth is, [they] intentionally waited out the statute of limitations and curbed their own investigation to avoid finding additional victims,” Attorney General Josh Shapiro commented during his press release last month.

“To reach the pinnacle of reform, we must abolish all time limitations on victims,” says Commonwealth Victim Advocate, Jennifer Storm. And it would seem this historic day is possible. As the General Assembly returns next week, the Office of Victim Advocate stands with survivors and the Fortney Family and asks the General Assembly to pass reforms that remove these barriers to justice that survivors deserve.

Lastly, but of equal importance, we implore the General Assembly to grant a one-time two year window of opportunity to ensure all victims of sexual abuse have a path towards justice.

[Read more on statute of limitations and reform here.](#)

*\*The criminal statute of limitations has been amended multiple times. Therefore, not every victim in the Commonwealth has until age 50. If the crime occurred prior to the multiple extensions of the statute, then it falls under the statute that applied at the time of the crime.*

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

The Fortney Family has respectfully asked that [their video](#) be shared widely. Also available for your use is a [background and overview on statute of limitations reform](#), as well as [guidelines on handling violations within faith based communities](#).

For additional inquiries and to schedule an interview, please contact the Commonwealth Victim Advocate, Jennifer Storm, directly at 717.756.9741 or [jstorm@pa.gov](mailto:jstorm@pa.gov).

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